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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Leading media reported that PM Ehud Olmert and PA Chairman  
[President] Mahmoud Abbas will meet today in an effort to salvage  
the joint declaration for the Annapolis meeting. Major media  
(banners in Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post) quoted Israeli and

Palestinian sources as saying that unless this last minute attempt is successful, Annapolis will end with separate statements. Israel Radio quoted the London-based Al-Quds Al-Arabi as saying that Olmert and Abbas will discuss a joint declaration draft presented to the Palestinians on Sunday by U.S. Consul General to Jerusalem Jacob Walles.

On Sunday Maariv reported that the Arab League is expected to decide at its meeting this Thursday that only ambassadors will represent Arab states, a decision Maariv describes as "humiliating" to the Americans and one that would turn the planned conference into a farce. Ha'aretz's website reports that PM Olmert will travel to Sharm-el-Sheikh tomorrow or Wednesday to meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to seek a high Arab attendance at Annapolis.

On Sunday Haggai Huberman of Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that the U.S. has been trying to "coax" Saudi Arabia into sending its foreign minister by dangling a major arms deal as a reward.

Maariv, quoting diplomatic sources, reported that President Bush will outline a new vision at Annapolis and use the speech to create an effect similar to what a joint declaration would have produced. Maariv reported that PM Olmert sent a personal letter to the President.

The media reported that today the cabinet is holding a special session to discuss the Annapolis meeting. Israel Radio quoted Olmert as saying at the session that Annapolis is important even if there are no negotiations. Leading media reported that on Sunday Labor Party leaders criticized Defense Minister Ehud Barak's attitude towards Annapolis, saying that the party has become too submissive to the right-wing parties in Olmert's coalition. Israel Radio reported that Peace Now has started a poster campaign against Avigdor Lieberman, picturing his face next to a smiling Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as two obstacles to peace.

Maariv reported that the Americans would like to see Israel release 2,000 Palestinian prisoners, noting that this would oblige Israel to change three out of six criteria that establish which prisoners have Qblood on their handsQ and, as such, are not releasable. On Sunday Israel Radio reported that Israeli officials have informed the U.S. that no more than 450 prisoners are going to be released. The Americans, Maariv reported, also want Israel to announce a complete settlement freeze as part of the pre-Annapolis activity.

Leading media quoted Tony Blair as saying on Sunday that Defense Minister Barak and Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad will announce a number of economic projects today that could create tens of thousands of jobs for Palestinians and give a sense of progress on the ground. The Jerusalem Post reported that the agriculture ministers of Israel, Egypt, and the PA will meet today in Rome at an FAO conference to discuss plans to increase cooperation.

On Sunday Ha'aretz reported that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, has accepted an invitation by IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi to visit Israel. He will be coming during the second week of December. Ha'aretz noted that visits to Israel by chairmen of the joint chiefs are very rare.

On Sunday visiting French FM Bernard Kouchner was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz that he is not ruling out a strike against Iran.

Ha'aretz reported that during his recent trip to the U.S., Defense Minister Barak urged American officials to find ways to engage Syria. Ha'aretz reported that on Sunday PM Olmert again hinted that messages are being exchanged between Israel and Syria. Major media cited pressure by Jordan and Egypt on Syria to attend Annapolis. (Jordan's King Abdullah II visited Damascus on Sunday.) Last night Channel 2-TV reported that the U.S. has changed its stance regarding the possibility of negotiations between Israel and Syria.

Major media quoted FM Tzipi Livni as saying on Sunday at a press conference with her French counterpart Bernard Kouchner that the future Palestinian state will provide a solution for all Palestinians, including both refugees and Israeli Arabs, in their struggle for national expression. The media, which cited anger among Israeli-Arab elected officials over Livni's remarks, quoted Raleb Majadele, Minister of Sports, Culture and Science, as saying:

"The honorable Foreign Minister is not authorized by the Arabs of Israel to decide where they will live." Some media quoted Livni's later "clarification" that Israeli Arabs will maintain their full rights.

Israel Radio reported that this morning a rocket launched from the Gaza Strip landed in a southern neighborhood of Ashkelon.

The Jerusalem Post and Ha'aretz reported that the government will evacuate newly squatting settlers from Hebron's "brown house."

Ha'aretz quoted Thomas Steg, the Deputy Spokesman of the German Finance Ministry as saying on Friday that the German government has rejected a request by Pensioners Affairs Minister Rafi Eitan to reopen the reparations agreement for discussion. The announcement comes a few days before the visit of German Finance Minister Peer Steinbrück. Steg was quoted as saying that the German government would open talks with the Conference on Jewish material Claims against Germany, but only on "amendments to the existing framework."

On Sunday Ha'aretz reported that on Friday the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations announced two former U.S. presidents, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, will serve as honorary chairmen for the National Committee for Israel 60 that will organize celebrations for Israel's 60th anniversary.

Maariv reported that official Egyptian sources told the newspaper that Israel is ignoring Egypt's efforts to thwart arms smuggling to Gaza. The sources were quoted as saying that since January around 100 smuggling attempts have been averted and around 150 tunnels destroyed.

On Sunday Yediot cited a scathing report issued by the Turkish technical team that inspected the archaeological digs at the Mugrabi Gate. The report accuses Israel of ignoring Jerusalem's cosmopolitan character, particularly on the Temple Mount, of violating international historical heritage laws and of a "deliberate and planned" effort to destroy the Muslim character of the Temple Mount and the Old City.

Ha'aretz quoted the human rights group Yesh Din as saying that the IDF keeps Palestinian detainees in shipping containers while they await their hearings in West Bank military courts.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak told Israeli Foreign Ministry officials as saying on Sunday that Russia is not opposed to sanctions against Iran, but that it does not think the time has come to impose them.

Leading media reported that 15 LAU missiles were stolen from an IDF base in the Golan.

Ha'aretz quoted Britain's Sunday Times as saying that the Winograd Commission's final report is expected to find PM Olmert responsible for the deaths of 33 IDF soldiers at the end of the Second Lebanon War.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post cited a poll by the Anti-Defamation League, as proof of U.S. support for Israel. The poll claims that around 56 percent view Israel as an ally and seriously interested in peace. Among those who think the chance for peace has diminished, Palestinians are blamed roughly twice as much as Israelis.

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Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "As the conference in Annapolis looks at the moment, it is doubtful whether it justifies the participation of such a high-ranking battery of Israeli ministers."

Meretz-Yahad Party Chairman Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "If there is no serious dialogue at this conference about the core issues ... it is better to stay home."

Dov Weisglass, top diplomatic adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "After Israel accepted the Roadmap and consented, subject to the conditions appearing in it, to establishing a Palestinian state, a new and completely different diplomatic situation was created."

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz: "The [Annapolis] conference has already achieved one thing -- Olmert can praise Abbas and say there is finally a Palestinians partner. But sadly for him, there is no Israeli partner."

Arab affairs correspondent Jacky Hoogie wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "There is great similarity between Sadat of 1977 and Bashar Assad of 2007.... Like Assad today, Sadat wanted peace, but warned in advance that if the stolen land was not returned by negotiations, there would be no choice but to employ force."

Block Quotes:

#### I. "Three People on a Flight"

Senior columnist Nahum Barnea wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/19): "The willingness of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, and the Defense Minister to share a conference, not to mention a plane, is truly a rare event, almost historical.... It was not with joy that Ehud Olmert decided to appoint Tzipi Livni as head of the negotiating team, and it was not with eagerness that he invited Barak to join the trip. He learned unwillingly that he does not have sufficient strength and public support to conduct the talks with the Palestinians on his own. He will have to share the stage, consult, restrain himself, absorb. This is also a good lesson for the other two passengers going to Annapolis. They will have to learn that running a country is not always a zero-sum game: When Olmert gets screwed, they are not necessarily on the side that gains. As the conference in Annapolis looks at the moment, it is doubtful whether it justifies the participation of such a high-ranking battery of Israeli ministers. It is no more than a series of speeches, three hours in all"

#### II. "It's Better to Stay Home"

Meretz-Yahad Party Chairman Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/19): "The absence of a discussion on the core issue at Annapolis will leave us stuck in the intersection, exposed to extremists on both sides.... The three leaders can 'leverage' their weakness in the upcoming meeting. They have very little to lose and a great deal to gain.... President George W. Bush tried democratization and a willingness to integrate Hamas into Palestinian politics, and failed. Olmert tried the unilateral option in Gaza, and failed. Abu Mazen tried a national unity government with Ismail Haniyeh, and failed. This can be their moment of truth -- the moment when they say what they have long known. They can agree in Annapolis about the principles of the final-status agreement.... If there is no serious dialogue at this conference about the core issues, and if it does not end with clear guidelines regarding the continuation of the negotiations, it is better to stay home and to try to attain significant achievements in the bilateral talks that began a few months ago. After all, if we really want to solve this accursed problem, we do not need external partners for this purpose."

#### III. "The U.S. Has Already Consented"

Dov Weisglass, top diplomatic adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/19): "Israel's character as a 'Jewish' state is a distinctly internal Israeli matter.... The Palestinian Authority has already recognized the State of Israel as a Jewish state, since there is no other Israel.... After Israel accepted the Roadmap and consented, subject to the conditions appearing in it, to establishing a Palestinian state, a new and completely different diplomatic situation was created: A Palestinian state was to be established,

which would be a national home for the Palestinians in the Diaspora, and the Palestinian refugees would be able to return to their recognized national home and not to Israel, just as the Jewish refugees (and there have been many of these) belong in the Jewish national home (Israel). This new symmetry, among other things, is what convinced the US administration to include in President Bush's letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in April 2004 a clear statement on the resettlement of the Palestinian refugees... For the first time, the U.S. declared clearly that in its opinion, Palestinian refugees should not be returned to Israel. With no return of refugees, there is no danger to the Jewish character of Israel, and no further need to preserve the 'hinting formula' and affirm it by the Palestinians. All this, of course, is on condition that Israel indeed firmly rejects any Palestinian demand for the return of refugees, and is careful to enforce the American commitment to support its position on this issue."

#### IV. "See You at the Next Summit"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in Ha'aretz (11/18): "[Through Israel's recent behavior] a chunk of the core issues, as it were, has been jarred loose and gotten stuck in President Bush's eye.... [Cabinet minister Avigdor Lieberman] can sleep in peace. He does not need any amendment of the Jerusalem Law or Palestinian recognition of a Jewish state. The Roadmap includes all the obstacles needed to thwart an accord. If all this were not enough to summarize the Annapolis conference, a major operation in Gaza is being promised by the Israel Defense Forces, an extraordinarily mightily one, a real war.... One gets the feeling that the conference will create more traps for the future instead of removing those of the past. The conference has already achieved one thing -- Olmert can praise Abbas and say there is finally a Palestinians partner. But sadly for him, there is no Israeli partner."

#### V. "The Syndrome of Israeli Folly"

Arab affairs correspondent Jacky Hoogie wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/19): "If even when it wins it loses, Israel must not wage another military campaign so that it does not bring another downfall upon its sons and its people. Since the Suez Campaign, in which the IDF participated alongside the French and British armies, Israel has not scored a clean military victory thanks to its military strength. Its only diplomatic victories, first and foremost the peace with Egypt, were forced upon it. We must remember this painful truth today, when coming to brandish the axe of war against Iran, and especially against Syria. There is great similarity between Sadat of 1977 and Bashar Assad of 2007. Sadat too, in his time, suffered a great many insulting epithets by Israelis and Americans, who did not know how to read him properly. They said that he was stupid [and] inarticulate.... Like Assad today, Sadat wanted peace, but warned in advance that if the stolen land was not returned by negotiations, there would be no choice but to employ force. What was perceived by the Arabs as betrayal in 1977 is now considered an achievement. The Arab states all want peace with Israel. Some have made peace, others need a dividend before doing so, and a third group maintains ties with Israel in secret. What has changed here in the 30 years since Sadat's

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groundbreaking trip to Jerusalem? Apparently, not much."

JONES